

T H E C L E V E L A N D M U S E U M O F A R T

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For release: January 10, 1973

THAILAND SCULPTURE SHOWN IN CLEVELAND

In its first major oriental show since the internationally-acclaimed "Chinese Art Under the Mongols" (in 1968) The Cleveland Museum of Art offers to the public today an extraordinarily beautiful exhibition, "The Sculpture of Thailand".

The 80 images of Buddha and associated deities are lent from public and private collections (including the Royal Collection) in Thailand and trace the development of sculpture over 13 centuries from approximately 600 A.D. to the 18th century. They are being shown in the United States for the first time and have already been seen at Asia House in New York last October.

As with most recent Cleveland exhibitions it is difficult to single out particular objects for special mention: "The Sculpture of Thailand", indeed, offers a baffling and astonishing variety, owing to the fact that the country was a crossroads in Southeast Asia for cultural movements and has been by reason of its geographical position an historic battlefield and melting pot. Nonetheless, it is impossible to avoid mention of the terra-cotta Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara in the Dvaravati style (7th-8th century) with its smile of ineffable gentleness. Like the terra-cotta cited above, the Buddha of Grahi is lent by the National Museum of Bangkok, and a view of these two objects alone, is enough to convince

the viewer of that institution's status as an incredible treasure house. This latter figure, made in A.D. 1183, remains in extremely fine condition and offers itself a remarkable example of Buddhist iconography.

The Hindu pantheon is less well represented in numbers; although the colossal Vishnu in Sri Deb style has a qualitative excellence that makes any statement about numbers merely a quibble. Hevajra, a divinity worshipped in the Tantric development of the Mahayana, appears in a dancing posture, and is related to similar dancing figures from Nepal and Cambodia in the museum's permanent collection.

Throughout the exhibition can be seen two elements -- serenity and power -- which unite all of these images in a continuity of expression from beginning to end.

The catalog may be regarded as a work of art as well. Brian Brake's excellent photographs provide the first impression and this is eminently supported by the text by Alexander B. Griswold, Theodore Bowie and Prince Subhadris Diskul of Bangkok. The Ford Motor Company provided funds for production making the book an extraordinary bargain at \$5.50 in soft cover, or \$17.50 in hardback. The National Endowment for the Arts also provided financial assistance for the exhibition, evidence of an encouraging trend in art patronage in this country.

The late Kenneth T. Young, former United States Ambassador to Thailand and a president of Asia Society was instrumental (in 1969) in opening the way for the show to come to America and Gordon Washburn, director of the Asia House Gallery worked on the project for three years previous to its New York opening. Following the Cleveland showing, the exhibition will

be seen in the Indiana University Art Museum, Bloomington, where Mr. Bowie is professor in the department of art, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, the Seattle Art Museum, and the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts. The show's exhibition period in Cleveland is for a shorter-than-usual term with closing date set for February 11. There is an admission charge of \$1.00 for adults and a fifty-cent fee for young people and students. Members are admitted free.
